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Remarks at a Reception for Hispanic Heritage Month

October 9, 2002

Bienvenidos. It is such an honor to have you all here to the *Casa Blanca, la casa de todos que viven en esta pais*. As the Surgeon General mentioned, I'm just a temporary resident—[laughter]—but *es un gran honor para mi familia de vivir aqui*.

I want to thank you all for coming. Hispanic Heritage Month is an important month for our country, particularly now that we're at a time of war. You see, Hispanic Heritage Month talks to the great diversity of our country and the fact that our country is a strong country because of our diversity.

And this particular month we welcome the influence of the Hispano in our country. We welcome the great values that our Hispanic Americans bring to America, the values of faith *y familia*. Part of our entrepreneurial spirit is made stronger by the Hispanics who live in America. We're really proud of this heritage. We appreciate the hard work. We appreciate the determination.

I love the stories of our Surgeon General, the success stories of families who have sought a better day and have worked hard, and Americans have been able to reap the benefit of the greatest country in the face of the Earth. So welcome to the White House. It's an honor for me to welcome you here.

Obviously, we're celebrating—one of the things we celebrate in Hispanic Heritage Month is the great talent of many Hispanos, and we saw some great talent today. And I want to thank Carlos Ponce for being the emcee. Carlos, I'm going to be watching the eBay auctions very carefully. [Laughter] Times get tough. [Laughter]

I appreciate *las Tejanas*. I appreciate Jaci Velasquez *y tambien* Jennifer Pena. They're great talent. I'm proud to call them Texans. We've got some great talent in our State, and these are two of the best. And I really want

to thank you all for coming. And make sure you tell everybody at home I might have changed addresses, but I haven't changed homes. [Laughter]

And I also want to thank Gian Marco. Listen, if he's the first Peruvian here, we might as well have started with one of the best. [Laughter] And I'm honored you're here, Gian. Thank you for coming.

I want to thank Johnny Delgado from the Baltimore Police Department for starting this, for reciting the Pledge. Johnny represents many of our Hispanic Americans who serve on the frontlines in the war against terror, our firefighters, our police officers, our EMS teams. And I'm so honored, Johnny, that you're here, and thanks for coming. On behalf of a grateful nation, I want to thank you and all the good folks who wear the uniform for the job you do.

I want to thank Senator Orrin Hatch for coming. He's a great friend of—he's a good buddy. I'm glad he's here. I'm glad he's in the Senate. [Laughter] One of my jobs is to put together an administration that is talented, an administration here to serve the country, not themselves, an administration that reflects the diversity of our country. And I'm doing just that. Obviously, you met our new Surgeon General, Rich Carmona. Rich is a—he's a piece of work. [Laughter] He'll do a fabulous job in that incredibly important position.

Gaddi Vasquez, who is Director of the Peace Corps, is here. Gaddi, thank you for coming. Hans Hertell is an *Embajador de*—to the Dominican Republic, is with us today. Hans is from Puerto Rico, a good friend of mine.

There's another Ambassador here who's not an American, but nevertheless he is the *Embajador de Mexico*, our close friends, Mexico. I appreciate Ambassador Bremer for coming. I'm honored you're here.

Mira, y tambien un otro amigo de mio. He is the *Gobernador*, the Governor of Tamulipas, Tomas Yarrington. I appreciate you coming, *Gobernador*. I don't know if this helps or hurts him, but he is a rising star in Mexican politics. [Laughter] I've known him, obviously when I was the Governor of Texas and now as the President. He's a good fellow, and I'm proud to call him friend.

Rosario Marin is here with us. Rosario is the Treasurer of the United States. Hector Barreto is the Small Business Administrator. I appreciate you coming, Hector. Eduardo Aguirre, who is the head of the—Vice Chairman of the Export-Import Bank. Eduardo, I'm glad you are here.

Jose Fourquet, who is the United States Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank—Jose, thank you for coming. Where are you, Jose? Oh, there he is. These are people I've appointed. These are part of the diversity of our administration. I'm glad they're here so I can herald their—their accomplishment and their service to the country.

Everybody has got to have a good lawyer—[laughter]—particularly me. *Mi abogado es un Tejano*, Al Gonzalez, my good friend.

Our military is—the Hispanic population in our country has served disproportionately in our military. The Hispanic population steps up when the country says, we need service. And they do. They have throughout our history. Today we've got with us Major General Chris Cortez of the United States Marine Corps. I've got great confidence in our military. I've got confidence in our troops. I'll talk a little bit about that in a second. But General, thanks for coming.

I appreciate my friend Emilio Estefan, who is the producer of this outfit. You want to talk about a cool guy. [Laughter]

We happen to have Miss Universe with us today, from Panama. Thank you for coming, Miss Universe. And I see my friend Raul from Texas is sitting next to you. [Laughter] He's probably claiming he should have that seat because he's from Panama and a Texan. [Laughter] I suspect it's for other reasons, but nevertheless. [Laughter]

As you probably know, as the Surgeon General mentioned, I'm a baseball fan. I love baseball. Some of the best years of my life were watching the mighty Rangers, and we've got a couple of mighty Rangers here with us. I saw one guy grow up from a 19-year-old kid, who's one of the greats of all time, and that's Pudge Rodriguez. I want to thank you for coming, Pudge.

And my daughters used to love to come to the game, and they fell in love early in life with Rafael Palmeiro. [Laughter] And I

want to thank you all for bringing your families. Yes, *mira*, thanks for coming, guys. I appreciate you. Hi, Lynn, how are you doing? Rosa.

I want to thank Nomar Garciaparra from the Red Sox for coming. Nomar, thanks for being here. Nomar, when we had the first tee-ball game at the White House, was there. And one of the things we're trying to do is use our backyard to promote baseball. And we had these kids come, and Nomar was here to help kick that off. I'm so honored you came.

I appreciate Octavio Dotel from the Houston Astros. Octavio, good to see you. Nelson Figueroa—*donde esta* Nelson? Nelson, thank you for coming.

These are the current players. These guys are stars and potential Hall of Famers. But we're also really fortunate to have some Hall of Famers with us, people who've actually done what these players are doing.

It is such an honor to have four Hall of Famers, starting with Rod Carew. Man, that guy could hit. I appreciate you coming, Rod. Tony Perez, Luis Aparicio, yes, *y por fin*, Juan Marichal—I'm really glad you all are here. You brighten my day. [Laughter] Thanks for coming.

One of my jobs as well is to make sure our bench is strong. I've named a fantastic Hispanic American to the bench, a young guy named Miguel Estrada. I named him to one of the highest courts possible, to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. It's an incredibly important appointment. He's well qualified. He is very smart. He came to our country from El Salvador, he couldn't speak English. He's now been picked, amongst all the candidates, to take on this highest of high positions in the bench. He's having trouble in the United States Senate.

There are some Senators—certainly not Senator Hatch, who is one of his strongest advocates—there are Senators who are playing politics with this good man's nomination. There are Senators who would rather not give him the benefit of the doubt, Senators looking for a reason to defeat him, as opposed to looking for a reason to herald his intelligence, his capabilities, his talent. I strongly object to the way this man is going

to be treated in the Senate. I urge the Senate to confirm the nomination of Miguel Estrada.

I talked about our military. The reason we're talking about our military these days is because we're at war, and we're at war for precisely the reason why we're here. We're at war because we love freedom. We love the fact that people are free in America, free to worship an Almighty any way you see fit, free to come to this country with a dream and realize the dream, free to express your opinion, free to—if you happen to be in the press, to write anything you want to write. That's freedom, and that's what we love. And it's hard to believe, but there's an enemy which hates freedom and hates us as a result of our embrace of freedom. And so therefore, we're at war. We're at war, and we're still at war. We're still at risk here in America. We're at risk because there's some enemies still lurking around out there.

This is a different kind of war, as the General would tell you. In the old days, you could destroy the person's tanks or airplanes or ships and be making progress. But these people don't have tanks. They don't have ships. They hide in caves and send youngsters to their suicidal death.

And see, so long as we embrace the diversity and freedom of our country, which we will always do, and so long as they're lurking out there, we're at war. But make no mistake, *sin duda venceremos*. There's no doubt about it.

We will win because of what we love. We will win because we're determined and strong. We will win because we're a nation which holds values dear to our heart. And we refuse to be intimidated by anybody, at any place, at any time. We will win because we want to uphold our duty and obligation to leave America intact and free, so future generations of people, Hispanic or otherwise, can realize dreams, can succeed, can realize their God-given talents. That's what this is all about.

And so I want to thank you for coming to honor this month, but I want to assure you that this great Nation will lead the world to be more free.

And we've got some difficult tasks at hand. Not only, we must chase down the Al Qaida, one by one, which we continue to do to this

very day, but we've also got to deal with threats that are real. And I gave a speech to the Nation the other day to discuss those threats in sober terms, to talk about the realities of the world in which we live.

It used to be in this great country we had two oceans protecting us, and if somebody had a problem across the sea, we might help them or we might not. Today, these oceans—the fact that the oceans no longer protect us mean that the battleground is here. So this great country will be deliberate. We will rally other nations. We will give other people a chance to deal with Iraq, for example.

The U.N., the United Nations now has a chance, Mr. Ambassador. As a member of the Security Council, I'm confident your nation will join us to—to send a clear message that this man must disarm before he hurts America or anybody else. And he has to make a choice. We're a patient nation. He's got a choice to make. His choice is, he must do what he said he was going to do. He said he wasn't going to have weapons of mass destruction. That's what we expect. We take a man for his word.

But if he doesn't disarm and if the United Nations won't act, for the sake of our freedom, we will lead other countries that love freedom as much as we do and disarm him. We owe it to our children. We love peace in this country, and when we see threats to peace, we will deal with them in a deliberate, calm, logical, and, if need be, forceful way.

And as we work to make America a more secure place and a safer place, we've got to make it a better place too. And that means making sure everybody gets a good education in our country—everybody.

We passed a really good education bill. I want to share the spirit of the bill, because I believe it speaks to the month we're celebrating. It says that every child can learn. That's the first thing. See, it starts with the attitude that if—if there are low expectations, if perhaps a school district or people think that because a parent doesn't speak English as a first language, therefore a certain child may not be able to learn, we're going to challenge that.

See, when you have low standards, you're liable to get bad results. That's what I have called the soft bigotry of low expectations.

We have challenged that soft bigotry. We say in this country, every child can learn—every child—not just some, not a select few, not those who may live in the nice suburban districts, but every child can learn.

And then it says that in return for receiving Federal money, we want to know. You see, in return for receiving Federal money, we expect local districts and States to show us whether or not each child is learning.

And when we find the fact that some children are not learning, we must correct problems early, before it's too late. Everybody counts in America. Each child matters in this country. To make sure we have a better America, no child—not one single child—needs be left behind.

I believe this Nation is strong in its diversity. We love our freedom. It's an incredibly great nation. And out of the evil done to our country on September the 11th, 2001, will come incredible good. That's what you must know about our Nation. Out of the evil done to America can come some great good.

If we stay tough and firm and strong, we can achieve peace. We can achieve peace for people here at home; we can achieve peace in the world. And by being—by loving your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself, we can achieve a better tomorrow. We can work together to eradicate the pockets of hopelessness, loneliness, and despair. People can fight evil by doing some good, by putting your arm around a lost soul and saying, "I love you. My fellow American, I love you."

There is no question in my mind, because of our strength, diversity, because of the values we hold, that we will be a stronger and more compassionate and better nation.

I want to thank you all for coming to celebrate this important month. It is an honor for me to welcome you to the White House. I appreciate so very much your contributions to our country.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Carlos Ponce, Jaci Velasquez, Jennifer Pena, and Gian Marco; Juan Jose Bremer Martino, Mexican Ambassador to the United States; entertainer Emilio Estefan; and Miss Universe 2002 Justine Pasek. The Office of

the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message to the Congress Extending the Period of Production of the Naval Petroleum Reserve

October 9, 2002

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 201(3) of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (10 U.S.C. 7422(c)(2)), I am informing you of my decision to extend the period of production of the Naval Petroleum Reserves for a period of 3 years from April 5, 2003, the expiration date of the currently authorized period of production.

Enclosed is a copy of the report investigating the necessity of continued production of the reserves as required by section 201(3)(c)(2)(B) of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976. In light of the findings contained in the report, I certify that continued production from the Naval Petroleum Reserves is in the national interest.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 9, 2002.

Proclamation 7606—Columbus Day, 2002

October 9, 2002

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In August 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed from Palos, Spain, embarking on a westward voyage and intending to establish a new trade route from Spain to the Far East. With three ships and a crew of approximately 100 men, he journeyed across the Atlantic Ocean. Instead of finding a new route to the Indies, Columbus discovered the Bahama Islands. Today, more than five centuries later, Americans continue to celebrate Columbus' bold expedition and recognize his pioneering achievements as an enduring symbol of imagination, courage, and perseverance.